



**The Image of Patriarchal Power in "Young Mr. Lincoln" (1939) and "Ivan the Terrible, Part I" (1945)**

Marsha Kinder

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# The Image of Patriarchal Power in *Young Mr. Lincoln* (1939) and *Ivan the Terrible, Part I* (1945)

*"Of all American films made up to now this Young Mr. Lincoln is the film that I would wish, most of all, to have made . . . I first saw this film on the eve of the world war. It immediately enthralled me with the perfection of its harmony and the rare skill with which it employed all the expressive means at its disposal. And most of all for the solution of Lincoln's image." Sergei Eisenstein, "Mr. Lincoln by Mr. Ford," (1945')*

John Ford's *Young Mr. Lincoln* (1939) and Sergei Eisenstein's *Ivan the Terrible, Part I* (1945) offer striking similarities in the way they inscribe their historical protagonists as forceful icons of patriarchal power. Both films center on a strong political leader from the past who brought unity to his nation in a period of political crisis. Both films reinscribe the myth of this historical figure in a way that comments on the contemporary political context in which the films were made. In both cases, the reinscription suppresses certain historical information about these figures (e.g., Lincoln's opposition to slavery and support of a strong centralized government, and Ivan's murderous acts of tyranny). These omissions help to control the way the spectator reads the relationship between these historical leaders and the reigning patriarchs in the contemporary context—i.e., preventing Lincoln from being identified with Franklin Delano Roosevelt (an issue examined in the highly influential *Cahiers du Cinéma* analysis of Ford's text<sup>2</sup>) and constructing Ivan as an historical precedent for Joseph Stalin (an issue explored by Herbert Marshall in his Preface to Eisenstein's autobiography<sup>3</sup>). As part of the political strategy of avoiding certain contemporary issues that might have proved troublesome, or even lethal in the Stalinist context, both films mythologize the historical figure in his youth,

showing the young man as he grows into and comes to embody political power. Both films use a tall lean figure who grows fully erect as he literally becomes a national giant before our eyes. Both films end with this lone phallic figure being acknowledged by an enthusiastic crowd of anonymous supporters who both witness and proclaim his glorious ascension into History.

I first noticed the striking similarities between these two films when I happened to see them screened on consecutive days—before I was aware of the existence of Eisenstein's essay on *Young Mr. Lincoln* (which was brought to my attention by Brian Henderson). In comparing these two films, I want to suggest that not only did *Young Mr. Lincoln* help to shape Eisenstein's conceptualization of *Ivan the Terrible*, but that his essay on Ford's film was also shaped by his experience of just having finished Part I of *Ivan*. In both reading Ford's Lincoln and designing his own Ivan, Eisenstein was concerned less with the historical accuracy of the portrayal than with the rhetorical power of the hero's "extravagant" visual image.<sup>4</sup>

But give any master of "personifying" historical monuments the task of inventing an appropriate figure, devoid of false pathos, for a bearer of the ideals of American democracy, and he would never think of creating such an extravagant figure—an exterior reminding one simultaneously of an old-fashioned semaphore telegraph, a well-worn windmill, and a scare crow clothed in a long, full-skirted frockcoat, and crowned with a shaggy top-hat in the shape of a stovepipe.

In all probability it is precisely through these external features that this historical figure can be shown as heroic and full of pathos.<sup>5</sup>

Rather than focus on the issue of influence, I propose to examine the visual treatment of patriarchal power in these two films and their common strategy of using the visual figure of the hero to direct the spectator's reading of

the narrative. In the process we will observe how the interplay among the three types of signifiers in the Peircian system of semiotics—the index, the icon, and the symbol—helps to create the kind of “harmony” that Eisenstein admired in Ford’s text and achieved in his own. While not offering “harmony” as a critical value, I am suggesting that in both films, as the spectacle of the hero’s physical image develops, this figuration helps distract us from the gaps in the narrative.

In Kristin Thompson’s excellent study, *Eisenstein’s IVAN THE TERRIBLE: A Neoformalist Analysis*, she uses Howard Hawks’s *Sergeant York* (1940) and John Ford’s *Mary of Scotland* (1936) “as a specific background” against which to read Eisenstein’s “unique alternative systems”—including his defamiliarizing devices of “discontinuities” and “excesses” that foreground stylistic patterns rather than the direct pursuit of the narrative.<sup>6</sup> She chose these two examples of Hollywood classical cinema for the comparison with *Ivan* because they are of roughly the same period, of the same genre of historical biography, and of the same “quality” of production. In the case of *Sergeant York*, she notes the added similarity of “a past national hero who is held up as a model and used for patriotic propaganda relating to World War II.” (p. 54) Of course, these same similarities are also present in *Young Mr. Lincoln*. But *YML* deviates from these other two examples in *not* sharing what Thompson describes as “the classical narrative cinema’s most prominent feature . . . its suppression of artistic motivation in favor of a clear, direct narrative structure. That is, the stylistic aspects of a film will function to present the story events but will simultaneously strive to efface themselves so that narrative virtually always governs the work’s dominant.” (p. 54) What I am arguing here is that it is precisely the extravagant figure of Lincoln as a dominant that deviates from the Hollywood codes and that bears such a striking similarity to Eisenstein’s construction of *Ivan*, Part I.

### Young Mr. Lincoln: The Erection of an Historical Giant

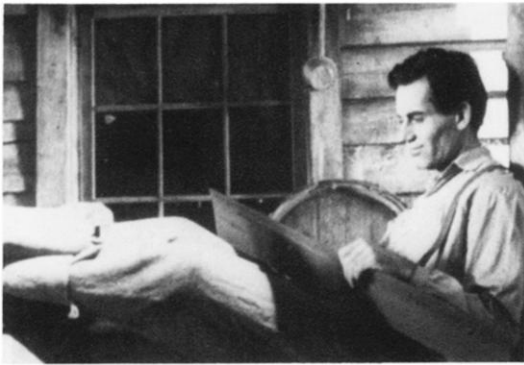
Though Eisenstein praised the perfect harmony of *Young Mr. Lincoln* and the key role of Lincoln’s figure in achieving it, his

analysis is not very specific. I intend to provide this specificity—by examining the visual codes on which Eisenstein’s reading can be grounded and which were omitted from the *Cahiers* analysis, which confined itself primarily to the narrative.<sup>7</sup> Although my analysis will center primarily on the film itself, it will make use of seven documents contained in the Twentieth Century-Fox Collections at the USC Doheny Memorial Library (Special Collections) and the UCLA Theater Arts Library:

- (1) “The Young Lincoln” by Howard Estabrook, dated 7-22-35, a 32-page “Preliminary Outline of Screen Story.”
- (2) “The Lincoln Trial Story” by Lamar Trotti, dated January 17, 1938, a 13-page story outline.
- (3) “Temporary Script” of “Young Mr. Lincoln,” dated January 1939. Original story and screenplay by Lamar Trotti. 158 pages.
- (4) Notes from a “Conference with Mr. Zanuck (on Temporary Script of January 13, 1939),” dated January 23, 1939, 6 pages.
- (5) “Final Script” of “Young Mr. Lincoln,” dated January 27, 1939. Original story and screenplay by Lamar Trotti. 144 pages.
- (6) Notes from a “Conference with Mr. Zanuck (on Final Script of January 27, 1939),” dated February 20, 1939, 4 pages.
- (7) “Young Mr. Lincoln,” Continuity and Dialogue Taken from the Screen, dated May 31, 1939. 133 pages.

### Poetic Prologue: “Did he grow tall?”

The opening printed poem introduces a fanciful construct: when the ghost of Lincoln’s mother, Nancy Hanks, returns to seek news of her son, she functions as a model spectator who is absent yet emotionally engaged. Our identification with her perspective will soon be strengthened by the appearance of another maternal spectator in the text, Abigail Clay, whom Lincoln will explicitly identify with his own mother and who will play a similar spectatorial role in lovingly assessing her own two sons as well as the young Lincoln. The emphasis on “the woman’s angle” can be traced all the way back to the original Estabrook story. In the film, she’s the one who poses the hermeneutic questions that control the narrative (“What’s he done? . . . Did he get on?”) and which draw us into the spectatorial project of reconciling the two contradictory images of Lincoln that are familiar to us all: “plain Abe,” her humble son, vs. “the Great Emancipator,” whom she didn’t live to see. The specificity of the mother’s



The “plain Abe” posture in our first look at Lincoln.

questions directs us to concrete codes that we can watch for in the narrative (e.g., “Did he learn to read?/Did he get to town?”) and also in the visuals (“Did he grow tall?”). Thus, quite offhandedly (as one of many codes) and quite “naturally” (through the image of growth), the opening poem succeeds in establishing physical stature as a key index of power before the film provides us with our first glimpse of Lincoln. When this quaint little poem is matched against the film’s final image of the gargantuan seated figure in the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, the juxtaposition defines the film’s central question: how is a humble boy transformed into an historical giant?<sup>8</sup>

The framing images of Lincoln that bracket the narrative are expressed through two different kinds of signs—the symbolic signifiers of the verbal poem, and the iconic representation of the sculpture. The film offers the answer to the central enigma of Lincoln’s transformation primarily through the third kind of signifier, the index. With its existential bond between signifier and signified, the index is the kind of sign most closely associated with Nature. And, as the *Cahiers* analysis has persuasively argued, Lincoln is presented as a hero whose morality is validated by both Law and Nature. The film suggests it was Lincoln’s physical stature that was the key sign of his greatness—a trait that can be read either as a symbol of freakish awkwardness in the culturally coded context of polite society (represented in the film by Mary Todd’s circle of friends), or as an index of biological superiority in the realm of nature. The film’s semiotic project is to guide the spectator’s reading of this sign—apparently validating the index (physical stature) but

actually transforming the icon (looking like a phallus) and the symbol (the cultural coding of size) into natural indices of moral superiority.

The reading of physical stature (“growing tall”) as an index of moral strength and as a dynamic of patriarchal power is developed primarily through three visual codes that are also verbally identified in the dialogue and dramatized in the narrative: standing up vs. lying or sitting down, untangling oneself into a visual “erection,” and measuring all doubles and antagonists to see who is “the bigger of the two.” In the *Cahiers* reading of Lincoln as phallus, he is defined both as a castrating and castrated figure; the film’s visual codes develop this construct primarily through the dynamics of the erection.

### Introduction to the Hero: “I’m plain Abraham Lincoln!”

In the opening scene we are introduced to Lincoln at an historic moment—1832 in New Salem, Illinois when he is making a political speech to win legislative office as a Whig. Yet, as the *Cahiers* analysis has pointed out, his greatness is not to be discovered in what he says, for in his opening lines he identifies himself as “plain Abraham Lincoln,” and enunciates political positions that are *not* normally associated with “the Great Emancipator.” One of the ways he is “dehistoricized” is by having our attention drawn away from what he says and toward what can be read from his body and its position in the frame.

The potential transformation from plain Abe to the historical giant is first figured visually in the movement from sitting down to standing up. In our first glimpse of Lincoln, he is half sitting, half reclining on a porch, with his head on the right side of the screen in profile, and his legs stretched out, so that his body fills the entire lower part of the frame. He holds a plank on his lap, an ambiguous image that can be read either as accentuating or suppressing the phallus. This posture prevents us from measuring him against John T. Stuart, the fatherly politician who later becomes his senior law partner and who here introduces him. When Lincoln gets up to speak, he “slowly unwinds himself” and grows fully erect, yet he’s cut off at the thighs, then at the waist. Though he is centered in the

frame, we still can't assess his stature. As he is about to begin speaking, he reaches out tentatively to lean against the post, then decides not to, as if realizing it is not appropriate for the occasion. This "false move" becomes a sign of both his physical and political awkwardness.

We first see Lincoln in full figure in long shot, only after his speech is over, as he walks toward the camera and encounters the Clay family who have just pulled into town. Though the *Cahiers* critics have treated these scenes as two separate sequences, Lincoln's figure moves directly from the public arena of history into the private discourse of melodrama, smoothing over the symbolic distance between these two modalities. It is in the realm of melodrama that he makes his most meaningful contact with the law (here acquiring Blackstone's *Commentaries*) and where he finds the model spectator, Abigail Clay, the surrogate mother who both inspires and perceives his moves toward greatness.

### Reading in Nature: "When I'm standing up, my mind's lying down"

In this second sequence, set in a grove of trees by a river, the two visual patterns introduced in the opening—the visual erection and lying down vs. standing up—are fully identified in the dialogue so that they can more readily control our reading of the rest of the film. The sequence opens with Lincoln in a highly unusual posture: he is lying on his back reading with his long legs spread wide, propped up against a tree, and the law book propped on his torso (again, looking in one shot as if it displaces the phallus).

When his fiancée Ann Rutledge approaches, he says, "Hello, Ann, . . . give me a minute to kind of untangle myself." Both verbally and visually the "untangling" evokes an erection—a move made in response to the presence of the woman he desires. The love between them is never fully consummated, for she will die before they marry and Lincoln's sexuality will be suppressed in the rest of the film (as the *Cahiers* analysis has argued). Yet it will be partially displaced onto the maternal figure of Abigail Clay, evoking the Oedipal configuration. The sexual potential in Lincoln's posture and the link with the Oedipal taboo are underlined by Ann's next line:



*Lincoln's unusual posture for reading in nature.*

"Aren't you afraid you'll put your eyes out, reading like that, upside down?" This faint Oedipal echo reminds us that the transformation of Nancy Hanks's son, plain Abe, into the Father of his Country can also be reinscribed within the privatized world of melodrama as the Oedipal son aspiring to fill the role of the father. In Lincoln's case there is no need to kill off the father because his own is never mentioned in the film (though he and his second wife were characters in the Estabrook story), and the surrogate patriarch Clay (whose name evokes connections both with man's humble roots in nature and with a former American giant of history) will die off screen as conveniently as will Ann Rutledge.

Both Lincoln's initial posture and Ann's remark draw our attention to the film's tendency to turn things "upside down"—its patterns of reversals and alternations that are made explicit in Lincoln's line that follows: "When I'm standing up, my mind's lying down, and when I'm lying down, my mind's standing up." This line introduces the mind/body duality that is an alternating pattern not only in Lincoln's development (as he alternately relies on his mental and physical powers), but also in the film's structure, which alternately relies on word and image to enunciate its controlling codes. Instead of accepting the moral connotations of these phrases and postures—*lying down* signifying laziness or passivity (as in "lying down on the job") and *standing up* signifying the assertion of moral courage (as in "standing up for one's rights"), the film redefines both moral "positions," showing that the alternation between both leads to greater strength. This alternation becomes another way of reconciling the

two Lincolns—the humble Abe who was comfortable lying down and the Great Emancipator who stood up for the underdog.

**Graveside Decision: “Ann, you win . . . wonder if I could have tipped it your way, just a little?”**

Although the rupture caused by the omission of Ann’s sudden death is smoothed over by a dissolve from a close-up of a ripple in the river in spring to a long shot of snow-covered ice flowing downriver in winter (a fairly conventional device that satisfied Zanuck’s request in the February 20th story conference for “a better transition to the shot of Ann’s gravestone”), the continuity provided by Lincoln’s figure and its postures is far more compelling. When Lincoln comes to Ann’s grave to decide whether to go into Law, he first stands fully erect. His indecisiveness is visually portrayed as an alternation between standing and squatting. What is new in this scene is that this alternating pattern is identified as a conscious strategy: Lincoln pretends to lose when he is actually in control; he stands full figure when he decides to let the toss of a stick decide his fate; he squats by Ann’s grave when he acknowledges that he may have let her win. This scene demonstrates both verbally and visually that sitting can no longer be read as a weak posture. Rather, sitting functions as a mediating position between “lying down” and “standing up” as forcefully demonstrated by the final image of the Lincoln Memorial.

**His First Case: “Gentlemen, just hold your horses and sit down!”**

Functioning as a rehearsal for the murder trial that will follow but in no way essential to the plot, this sequence dramatizes how Lincoln consciously uses the feigning of weakness, the alternating between physical strength and mental wit, and the power dynamics of sitting and standing in his new practice of Law. The scene opens with Lincoln sitting in a chair with his feet propped up on an open window and his head on the right side of the frame—a position very similar to the posture that designated “plain Abe” in the opening scene. Two angry farmers stand behind him. After he derisively tells these “gentlemen” to hold

their horses and sit down, a reverse angle reveals the seated Lincoln with his head on the left, looking more commanding and beginning to resemble the image from the Lincoln Memorial. When Lincoln confronts one man with the other’s accusations, he suddenly pops up and turns his chair around before sitting back down. As he presents his clever mediating solution, he feigns a mock humility. When he says, “the whole thing’s settled,” he stands up for the first time, momentarily blocking one of the men from the camera and forcing the other to look up at him and acknowledge his physical and mental victory. When the men refuse to accept his clever solution, Lincoln bullies them into acquiescing. He dons his stove-pipe hat and says, “Yes siree, Bob,” both visually and verbally accentuating the phallic nature of his victory.

**The Fair: (Lincoln, choosing between two pies) “First one, then the other.”**

Though appearing loose and varied, the fair sequence demonstrates the codes of alternation that have thus far guided the film’s structure and finally launches the plot that will control the narrative development of the scenes that follow. In the story conference on February 20, 1939, Zanuck expressed concern over the length of this sequence (“our only slow part of the picture”) yet wanted to retain the weight-lifting scene or “to devise something to keep Lincoln alive in this episode.” It was clearly spelled out that Lamar Trotti was to discuss the “sequence with Mr. Ford and work it out along the lines discussed in conference.”

The sequence opens with an historical context, an Independence Day parade that includes veterans from the ’76 Revolution, but ends with the first climax of the melodramatic fiction; the opening is light and playful, but it moves into murder. The sequence intercuts between the sexual harassment of the wife of Matt Clay by two bullying locals, and a series of games in which Lincoln demonstrates his mental and physical powers of mediation (judging a pie contest, splitting rails, and winning a tug of war). These games also function as double symbolic substitutions for the battles he will face both in the melodramatic context of the film’s plot (the lynch scene and trial)

and in the historic context of the Civil War (where he would become the Great Emancipator).

This sequence extends the alternating movement between history and melodrama that first appeared in the opening scene, particularly with the introduction of the Clays (originally Lincoln was to meet a different family), an addition that was suggested by Zanuck in the story conference on January 23, 1939.

Mr. Zanuck . . . feels that we are inclined to be narrative rather than dramatic in the first part of the story, and then when we come to Abigail and her family, it is hard to adjust oneself to the change of mood. Therefore, it was decided to introduce the family in the opening, making it Abigail and her family who are moving to this country . . . Seeing her in the opening episode will serve to tie her up with the story and will help the transition to the "murder" and what follows. Too, it will give the story an interesting slant to suggest that this woman from whom he gets the law book is the one who was instrumental in starting Lincoln on his career. In other words, what he learns in the book which he originally got from her, enables him to serve her and her boys later on. (p. 1)

In both sequences we can see Zanuck, as the embodiment of the Hollywood institution, urging a conventional narrative linearity that is repeatedly balanced by Ford's unconventional manipulation of the larger structural relations. Here in the fair sequence this pattern of alternating between history and melodrama serves to introduce the film's central narrative episode of the murder while keeping the audience from realizing how unconventionally late the plot gets started. The melodramatic plot of murder and trial created by Lamar Trotti is positioned within the larger structural movement between the two historic images of Lincoln (plain Abe vs. the Great Emancipator) that frames the entire narrative and was the thematic center of Estabrook's original story.

The fair sequence also introduces the film's only other historical figures—Mary Todd and Stephen A. Douglas, who form a romantic triangle with Lincoln and thereby strengthen the bond between the melodrama and history. They also function as spectators, who are harder to convince of Lincoln's greatness than Abigail Clay. Yet all three spectators in the text fit within the Oedipal configuration



*Top: Lincoln sits on a low curb between Douglas and Mary Todd. Bottom: when Lincoln stands, both have to look up to him.*

—either as the loving mother or the rejecting parental couple.

The physical staging of their meeting accentuates the dual perspective of Lincoln as both their social inferior and physical, mental and moral superior. When he is introduced, he is sitting on a low curb while they are seated on chairs on the sidewalk. When he stands up to shake hands, he suddenly towers over them. When he sits back down on the curb, Mary literally has to speak down to him. Lincoln calls attention to the visual dynamic by using the images of sitting in a self-deprecatory way, undercutting his new identity as a lawyer which Douglas has just praised: "What I'm really doing is wearing a hole in Stuart's best rocking chair." This passivity is exposed as a deceptive pose in the three competitive games that follow.

Since the Tar Barrel burning immediately follows the Tug of War, we at first think it's to be the fourth game, but this night event merely provides an atmospheric transition to the murder (a device suggested by Zanuck). When Lincoln appears at the scene of the

crime, he stands center screen with his back to the camera, wearing his stove-pipe hat, with one foot propped up and an arm leaning on a fence. This time he makes no false move; the posture signals a man of balance and judgment, contemplating the scene. This striking image not only “keep(s) Lincoln alive” in this scene, but it also allows him temporarily to control the point of view and to reaffirm the central position of his iconic figure in the narrative, even within this highly episodic sequence and even within the “murder” plot. Lincoln confidently walks against the crowd, who are fast becoming a lynch mob, and goes directly to Abigail Clay. Not recognizing him, she asks, “Who are you?” He replies without false humility: “I’m your lawyer, ma’am.”

What are we to make of Abigail’s failure to recognize Lincoln, particularly if, as I have argued, she functions as a model spectator? In their first meeting, Lincoln was seen for the first time in full figure; in this second meeting, as he again comes to her aid, he confirms his unqualified commitment to the Law. Her failure of recognition works against narrative continuity in order to call our attention to this shift in Lincoln’s image.

### **The Lynch Mob: “I’m just a fresh lawyer trying to get ahead”**

This sequence, essential to the melodramatic plot, is also constructed as a midpoint in Lincoln’s movement between the two images of plain Abe and the Great Mediator. When the lynch mob tried to break into the jail with a huge log and when Lincoln threads his way through the crowd to oppose their action, saying “I can lick any man here, hands down,” we are bound to look backward to the rail-splitting and tug-of-war games in the fair sequence and to his disarming humor and strong-arm tactics in his first law case. The *Cahiers* critics describe Lincoln’s triumph in this scene as castrating, particularly when he makes the mob lay down the phallic pole.<sup>9</sup> The sequence also makes us look forward to Lincoln’s historical ascension (which is partially based on this castrating power), particularly when he says: “We seem to lose our heads in times like this, we do things together that we might be ashamed to do by ourselves.” From this point on in the narrative, his physical size will no longer cast him in the role of

bully (he will use his mental powers to impose his will), but will elevate him to the position of grand statesman.

The visuals also help to underline the transition. When he first confronts the crowd at the jail, he spreads his arms and props them against the door as if to gain better leverage for his opposition. The formal framing of his figure by the doorway also makes it easier for us to connect this posture with Biblical images of Samson or Christ. Yet this gesture also evokes Lincoln’s “false move” in the opening sequence, which was a sign of awkwardness and self-doubt; here the gesture is transformed into a sign of grace under pressure. Just before he makes his statesman-like speech, the shift in tone is signalled by a close-up of Lincoln in isolation, which enables him to transcend this melodramatic context. Subsequently there is an inset close-up of Abigail, expressing gratitude and registering full comprehension of his control over this perilous scene. When everyone else leaves, Lincoln is left alone with the abandoned pole; the camera observes him in long shot, at last surrendering his full figure to our uninterrupted gaze. Not only do such shots emphasize the subtle shift in Lincoln’s image, they also help the spectator to bridge the gap between melodrama and history.



### **Mary Todd’s Party: (Mary, describing Lincoln’s dancing) “The worst way I’ve ever seen”**

Lincoln’s heroic action in the lynch scene does enable him to “get ahead”; it brings an invitation to Mary Todd’s party where his physical stature will mark him as outcast. The sequence opens with a series of short scenes



that alternate between Mary's written missive and Lincoln's tangled postures as he grooms himself for the event. His self-conscious awkwardness is displayed again on the dance floor, where his stiffness is read not as phallic strength, but as clumsy ineptitude. Though the several allusions to his ugliness in earlier versions of the script have been omitted, his physical eccentricity is so extreme in this scene that it is even noted by the *Cahiers* critics who have otherwise ignored the visual dynamics of Lincoln's extravagant figure.<sup>10</sup>

When Mary leads Lincoln to the balcony, the presence of the river and the music evokes the natural context in which his stature regains its moral and emotional superiority. As if acknowledging the reversal in values, she retreats and sits down, looking up to him as he gazes at the river below and thinks of Ann Rutledge.<sup>11</sup>

### Lincoln plays "Dixie": "Comes down from David's harp in the Bible"

This brief scene contributes nothing to the plot, but it guides the spectator in how to read metaphoric substitutions, mythical analogues and historic reverberations that construct the figure of Lincoln. When Lincoln dwells on the river, his friend Efe teasingly remarks: "Folks'd think it was a pretty woman or something, the way you carry on." This remark renders explicit the visual identification between nature and woman which was dramatized at the end of the party sequence. Lincoln jokes that his hat is his office. When we consider that his stove-pipe hat makes him look like a walking phallus, we realize that his power of office does lie in his incarnation as a phallic icon.

When we see the tall figure of Lincoln astride a mule accompanied by a short, rotund side-kick with a coon-skin cap, we are likely to think of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza.<sup>12</sup> This iconic connection makes us look for deeper thematic significance: the historic Lincoln can be read as a quixotic idealist who would sally forth to do battle, a comic figure who would later prove his tragic potential.

The music on the audio track (which contrasts sharply with the waltzes and reels played at Mary's party) leads us to historic connections.

- Efe: What's that tune you're playing?
- Lincoln: Don't know—catchy though.
- Efe: Makes you want to march or something.

This dialogue forces us to listen closely to the tune, which turns out to be *Dixie*—the film's only direct allusion to the Civil War where Lincoln would prove his greatness. Yet even this brief ironic allusion clearly indicates the reluctance of the film-makers to reveal Lincoln's commitment to the Northern cause.

One of the reasons this scene is so elliptical is that it formerly served as a transition to scenes that have been omitted from the film—cuts that were at least partially motivated by a desire to reduce the direct references to slavery. In the original Estabrook story, slavery was the key issue in Lincoln's congressional race with Douglas, which was the central focus of their rivalry. There was a slave market scene and an important black character named Julep, who was to be played by Bill Robinson and who was described as "a happy-go-lucky negro slave, singer, dancer and musician, freed by Offutt and befriended by Lincoln." Estabrook proudly claimed for his story an "opportunity for approximately ten musical numbers or important use of music, and approximately four dance numbers"—perhaps enough to identify the film with the musical genre, whose lighthearted tone might have made the slavery issue more palatable.

In Lamar Trotti's story outline, Julep, the slave market scene and the congressional race were all omitted (along with most of the song and dance numbers), but in their place was the following symbolic scene—which seems to belong more in a film by D. W. Griffith than by John Ford.

**A FARMHOUSE.** Men been killing hog. Big pot boiling. Over to side, small children with big pot, full of water. Starting to light fire. Pick-aninny in fire. Lincoln stops. Children explain trying to boil black out of the child so won't have to be sold, can be white and free. Lincoln's face. (Only touch of slavery issue.) Lincoln thoughtful, perhaps one revealing remark to Herndon.

In Trotti's "Temporary Script," this chilling scene takes place at Carrie Sue's family farm and immediately follows Efe's line about Dixie making "you want to march." When one of the children tells the astonished Lincoln, "We're aimin' to boil Cuffy clean white—like us—and the hog—so's he can't never be sold!" Lincoln makes his "revealing"



*Lincoln quips, "People used to say I could sink an axe deeper than anyone they ever saw," while beside him Carrie Sue (Ann Rutledge's surrogate) vigorously stirs a boiling cauldron with a huge stick.*

remark to Efe: "It's going to take a *world of boiling* to bring that about—a *world of boiling!*" (p. 94). Not only is Lincoln's remark highly ambiguous, but he leaves the "pick-aninny" in the pot. This remarkable scene was cut from the January 27th "Final Script" along with Lincoln's playing of *Dixie*, but was restored in the February 20th story conference, where the notes contain the following statement:

The episode of the negro kid being boiled—and Carrie Sue—to be confined into one scene, as discussed in conference. This includes putting back Lincoln playing *Dixie*. (p. 3)

In the film, the scene is gone and all that remains is *Dixie*.<sup>13</sup> In suppressing the slavery issue and Civil War, the film simplifies not only the historic Lincoln and his achievements, but also the power of the phallic icon by denying its potential for lethal violence.

When Lincoln is asked about his "Jew's harp," he reveals his identification with the Biblical David, from whom he could not be more visually distinct, yet this connection bolsters Lincoln's image as Outsider. In both the "Temporary Script" and the "Final Script," Lincoln had earlier implicitly identified himself with Jews at Mary's party in a joking remark made immediately after his denial of membership in the "very fine old" Lincoln family of Massachusetts:

MAN

Yet there's an odd similarity in Christian names. I remember there was an Abraham, a Solomon and a Levi Lincoln.

LINCOLN

(lifting his eyebrows)

Did you say "*Christian*" names?

(p. 79)

The Biblical text of David and Goliath strengthens Lincoln's validation by the Book and the Law. It also introduces a mythic battle that substitutes indirectly for the Civil War that was suppressed from the film. More specifically, Lincoln's movement from underdog to historic giant is given mythic resonance by his double identification with both David *and* Goliath. The myth can be reinscribed politically in the historic context of Lincoln who fought for the underdog while embodying Big Government. As an historical figure, David himself possessed this double identity—he was the underdog who slew the giant, yet he also was the strong Jewish patriarch who unified his people and led them to a new level of historic greatness.

The story of David and Goliath can also be read as a politicized version of the Oedipal myth, where the puny son of a subjugated race challenges and defeats a giant patriarch from a more dominant culture. Moreover, David may have played the conquering hero in his battle with Goliath, but in the tale of David and Bathsheba he was guilty of murder and adultery. The issue of stealing another man's wife is evoked in the film when the two locals harass the wife of Matt Clay. In both the "Temporary Script" and the "Final Script" this sexual aggression is intercut with the strong man sequence that Zanuck liked so well, in which Lincoln (as local underdog) successfully challenges a Circus Hercules—a juxtaposition that evokes both the sexual and patricidal components of the Oedipal configuration. When Hercules was cut from the script, his function was taken over by the allusion to David.

The moral ambiguity of the Oedipal configuration is extended only figuratively to Lincoln, who threatens to take Mary Todd away from the more experienced Stephen Douglas, who doubles as romantic and political rival. Yet Lincoln is relieved of moral responsibility since Mary is the romantic aggressor, and since sex is totally omitted from the depiction of their relationship.

## **Lincoln Visits the Clay Women: “You folks are just like my folks”**

This scene equips Lincoln for his courtroom victory by strengthening his moral alignment with Abigail Clay and by providing him with another book, the Almanac, that he will use to catch the murderer. The scene also functions to integrate Lincoln's dual posture as an easy-going country boy who feels at home with the Clays and as a wily city lawyer who uses his strength to defend the underdog. The phallic nature of Lincoln's figure is stressed more emphatically in this scene than practically anywhere else in the film. He is introduced wielding an axe, quipping “People used to say I could sink an axe deeper than anyone they ever saw,” while beside him Carrie Sue (Ann Rutledge's surrogate) is vigorously stirring a boiling cauldron with a huge stick. Repeatedly Lincoln is positioned either leaning on or standing next to a vertical pole that helps support the log cabin in which the Clays reside. The proverbial log cabin helps to identify the Clays with Lincoln and to validate his reading of the Clay women as substitutes for his own dead mother, sister and fiancée. Part of this shared identity is a racist alignment with the South in which whites are perceived as victims of non-whites; not only do we learn that Mr. Clay was killed by a drunken Indian, but Lincoln claims, in his single direct reference to slavery, that “Kentucky's a mighty fine place to live, but with all the slaves coming in, white folks had a hard time making a living.” The “Final Script” contained a longer version of this speech that made Lincoln sound even more like an apologist for slavery: “A good slave didn't have to worry. The people who owned him looked after him, but all we ever had was the right to go and come as we pleased. Not that I stand up for slavery, but I can see it has its advantages when your stomach's empty.” (p. 84)

When Lincoln talks comfortably with the Clay women, he reclines in the “honest Abe posture” from the opening shot. As soon as he strategically gets Abigail alone to ask her the crucial question that will be posed in court (“Which of your two sons killed Scrub White?”), their relationship is redefined by their shifting positions. She suddenly stands and cowers in fear; Lincoln follows, looming

beside her in a threatening posture. After he accepts her refusal, a reverse two-shot makes his superior size look protectively paternal. The castrating potential of the phallic figure is held in check by the moral power of the Mother.

## **The Judge's Visit: “Don't you think you ought to have some older lawyer with more experience to help you out tomorrow?”**

The Oedipal rivalry with the father is presented most pointedly in the scene where the judge comes “as an older man,” to give young Lincoln advice, a scene positioned between the two courtroom sequences and which compresses three scenes from an earlier version of the script (a condensation suggested by Zanuck).

This narrative condensation enables the scene to evoke all of the film's earlier sequences with Oedipal traces through visual and audio allusions. The scene opens with Lincoln playing his Jew's harp (reminding us of his identification with David) and seated in a tangled posture with his feet propped up on an open window (reminding us of a similar posture in the scene with Ann Rutledge). He looks down at Mary Todd and Stephen Douglas passing beneath the window in an intimate tête-à-tête, reminding us of the fair sequence where the romantic triangle was introduced.

When the judge advises Lincoln to withdraw from the case, Lincoln raises his left foot and positions it at the top of the frame. In the most disruptive shot in the whole film, his gigantic foot directly confronts the camera, accentuating the rebellious nature of this posture and suggesting that the frame can hardly contain Lincoln's coiled body which is straining to unleash its full powers. When the Judge



proposes Douglas, Lincoln's romantic rival, as an older, more experienced replacement, we see Lincoln in profile in the "plain Abe" posture from the opening sequence. He leans forward and politely refuses, holding his indignation in check. He remains seated throughout the scene, never flaunting his physical stature, and then resumes playing the Jew's harp, identifying himself with the challenging underdog on both visual and audio tracks, but expressing total confidence that he holds in reserve both the mental and physical powers of the giant.

### **The Two Courtroom Sequences: "the bigger of the two"**

When J. Palmer Cass, as the key witness for the prosecution, claims "it was the bigger of the two" Clay brothers who killed his buddy Scrub White, he identifies a visual code that we have been using all through the film to evaluate Lincoln in relation to his inferior rivals. Nowhere is this physical dynamic more apparent or more playfully varied than in the two courtroom sequences—a dynamic that was present in the Estabrook story ("the young lawyers and Lincoln occupy themselves chatting and measuring their heights to see who is the tallest—Lincoln tops the others who attribute it to his long legs"). In one shot of the film, the Clay boys are deep in the foreground with Matt, the taller brother, on the left; between them in mid-ground stands Lincoln's opponents as mental and moral pigmies (even Douglas is only slightly larger than the others) and visually evokes "the bigger of the two" before it is verbalized by Cass. The verbalization is registered by Lincoln as he sits upright in a posture that clearly prefigures the historic image in the Lincoln Memorial.

In both courtroom sequences Lincoln employs all of the visual and verbal strategies he had used in previous scenes, but with more wit and daring, for now the issue is climactic for the plot. His castrating tactics from the lynch scene here depend on his disarming humor, and the phallic pole is reduced to a cigar. When he reveals that Palmer's real name is Jack Cass, Lincoln snatches a cigar from the witness's hand and tosses it on the floor, making the jury erupt into derisive laughter. In the final courtroom reversal, when Lincoln

accuses Cass, the accuser, who is his physical equal and mental inferior, he says, "Your body hid what you were doing." This remark reminds us, not only that the visualization of the murder fooled both the model spectator Abigail Clay and the film audience, but also that the semiotics of physical stature must be read in combination with other codes.<sup>14</sup>

### **The Double Ascension into History and Nature: "I don't reckon neither of us better underrate each other from here in."**

In the last two scenes (neither of which is essential to the plot) Lincoln's final transformation from humble son to powerful patriarch is doubly validated as a matter of public record in History and as an organic development in Nature.

His historic ascension takes place in the corridors of Justice where it is witnessed by the historic figures Mary Todd and Stephen Douglas, who now fully acknowledge his greatness. The alternating downward and upward angle point-of-view shots between Lincoln and Douglas exaggerate the former's physical superiority, assuring us that he's "the bigger of the two" and can never again be underrated. In Trotti's original story outline, he says: "America's future written in these two men and their differing views! Lincoln tall and gaunt and merry. Douglas short and fussy and importantly dignified." Since their "differing [political] views" have been suppressed from the film, their contrasting physical images and visual perspectives are meant to carry the full weight of this historic contrast. After turning away from Todd and Douglas, Lincoln walks toward a cheering crowd whom we hear but don't see—an omission that not only encourages the film audience to conflate the approving spectators from the diegesis with the accolades of future generations, as the *Cahiers* critics note, but also to project ourselves as an audience into the text. In the final shot Lincoln appears as a lone, fully erect figure, framed by a rectangle of light, making his grand entrance onto the stage of History.

Whereas in History the ascension is achieved through metonymy, a matter of positioning, in Nature Lincoln's "stunning departure . . . into the landscape" (to use Eisenstein's phrase) occurs through metaphoric substitutions facil-



## Ivan the Terrible, Part I: The Fetishizing of the Icon

An equally detailed analysis of *Ivan the Terrible, Part I* would produce far more differences from *Young Mr. Lincoln* than similarities in the visual codes. Limits of space prevent me from presenting such an extended treatment here. The shorter analysis that follows is designed specifically for the comparison of the two films, foregrounding their common strategy of using the figure of the iconic hero as a stylistic pattern that directs the reading of the narrative.

itated by dissolves. Accompanied by his Sancho, the chivalric Lincoln bids farewell to his mother surrogate Abigail Clay and is kissed by Carrie Sue. This time when he takes his solo walk into the future, he tells Efe: "I think I might go on a piece, maybe to the top of that hill." This line encourages us to read the silhouette shot of Lincoln climbing the hill as his rise to power; the thunder claps and "glory Hallelujahs" from *The Battle Hymn of the Republic* on the sound track as the Civil War; and, after he disappears from the frame, the coming rain as his tragic end.<sup>15</sup>

The film dissolves from the rain to a close shot of the famous statue of the Lincoln Memorial, pulls back to a medium shot, then dissolves to a different angle, continuing the camera's backward movement until the full seated figure is revealed. This gradual disclosure of the statue leads us to wonder how tall would he be if this gargantuan figure ever stood up and became fully erect!

Located in Washington, the seat of American power, this historic monument is pivotal to Ford's "solution of Lincoln's image" that Eisenstein so much admired. When the humble son becomes the good father of his country, he is shown seated—a mediating position that is far less threatening than the fully erect posture, particularly to other sons and patriarchs but also to loving mothers. Like Teddy Roosevelt's motto, "Speak softly but carry a big stick," Lincoln's seated phallic figure designates a man who could choose both to exercise and restrain his force, but who always held additional power in reserve and who always possessed extraordinary potential, whether mythologized as the potent "Young Mr. Lincoln" or as the historic giant cut off in his prime.

One of the key similarities between the two iconic figures is their visual extremity. Though it is always heroic, never awkward nor comic, Ivan's phallic figure is as "extravagant" a spectacle as Lincoln's. Not only is his body "a purely compositional element" like Lincoln's, but his "expressivity" is extended "to the entire visual field," making him (in Kristin Thompson's terms) truly expressionistic.<sup>16</sup> Although the sets in *Young Mr. Lincoln* rarely reflect the hero's body and the film never goes so far as *Ivan* in violating the spatial and temporal codes of realistic representation, the spectacle of Lincoln's figure and postures frequently distracts us, as we have seen, from discontinuities in the narrative and from the symbolic distance between history and melodrama.

In both films there are temporal gaps of indeterminate length between most sequences. They are frequently bridged by fairly conventional devices such as visual markers in *Young Mr. Lincoln* (e.g., the dissolve between two seasonal shots of the river and the close shot of a dated tombstone in the graveside sequence, or the insert shot of a dated newspaper item when Lincoln becomes a town lawyer in Springfield), or in *Ivan* by dialogue hooks (e.g., ending the wedding banquet with the war cry, "To Kazan!"), and opening Ivan's deathbed sequence with someone explaining "while on the very way back from Kazan, the Tsar fell ill") or by the changing lengths and shapes of Ivan's hair and beard from one sequence to another. By marking the temporal gaps they bridge, such transitions actually accentuate the ruptures. In contrast, the visual dynamics of the hero's physical image provide an iconic pattern of continuity that fills in for

narrative development by drawing the spectator's attention away from ruptures in the plot.

In "A Dialectic Approach to Film" (written in 1929), Eisenstein speculated that the visual image might one day provide a unifying structure in place of the plot.

Quite logically the thought occurs: could not the same thing be accomplished more productively by not following the plot so slavishly, but by materializing the idea, the impression, of *Murder* through a free accumulation of associative matter? . . . The plot is no more than a device without which one isn't yet capable of telling something to the spectator! In any case, effort in this direction would certainly produce the most interesting variety of forms.<sup>17</sup>

In his later essay on *Young Mr. Lincoln*, Eisenstein perceived that Ford had made just such an effort.

His informal plot, almost plotless or anecdotal, . . . looks on closer inspection like a thoroughly composed image synthesizing all those qualities that shone in the historical-political role played by this American giant.<sup>18</sup>

Despite or rather *because* of the weakness in its plot, Eisenstein claimed for *Young Mr. Lincoln* "an astonishing harmony of all of its component parts, a really amazing harmony as a whole"<sup>19</sup> and it is precisely this quality that made him wish he had directed the film.<sup>20</sup>

In her detailed and comprehensive analysis of *Ivan the Terrible*, Kristin Thompson certainly acknowledges the central role of Ivan's figure. Yet she does not deal with the way it serves narrative development, particularly since she is concerned with foregrounding narrative discontinuities in contrast to Hollywood classical cinema. In fact, her analysis of the discontinuities is so exhaustive that I feel no need to dwell on further examples here. Partly because she treats the three parts of *Ivan* as one continuous structure (arguing that "the breaks between parts do not necessarily represent the most significant structural pauses or turning points in the narrative" (p. 61), she tends to neglect certain structural lines that distinguish Part I of *Ivan* from Part II, particularly when the former is set against *Young Mr. Lincoln*. As Thompson acknowledges in the introduction to her neo-formalist methodology, "The use of other backgrounds

would allow other elements to come forward" (p. 58).

Instead of using the double ascension that closes *Young Mr. Lincoln* or the contrasting images of the hero from the poetic prologue and historic monument that frame Ford's film, Eisenstein brackets Part I of *Ivan* with two contrasting coronations that doubly anoint Ivan as Tsar.<sup>21</sup> Within these framing ascensions, the narrative traces the transfer of power from the institutional icons of the monarchy—crown, scepter, orb—to the person of Ivan, transforming him into the living embodiment of a unified Russia. The temporary withholding of Ivan's person and face in the opening coronation is inscribed as a sign of his temporary powerlessness, but through the paradoxical dynamics of desire, in the final coronation Ivan's deliberate withholding of himself from the people becomes one of the essential strategies for completing his own fetishization. In this reinscription of the myth of Ivan, political rule is eroticized.

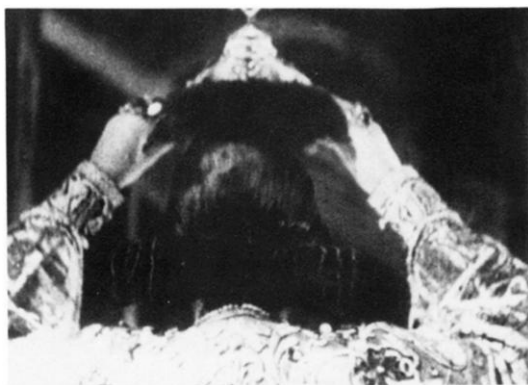
In the wartime context of 1943–45 when the film was made, this process of fetishizing the hero evoked and helped to justify the "cult of personality" that had developed around Stalin. While Part I pleased Stalin in its reinscription of Ivan as an historic precedent for his own fetishization, Part II raised serious moral questions about this process, suggesting it might be a perversion that underlay all political tyranny. Not surprisingly, it evoked the wrath of Stalin who suppressed the film.

### The Opening Coronation: The Struggle for Signification

In this opening sequence, the emphasis is on the traditional symbols of the monarchy that are passed on from one ruler to another. Within this institutional context, we watch the young Ivan begin to take an active role in usurping and manipulating the signs of power. Since his blood is not a strong enough index to secure his right to the throne, he based his claim on his masculine strength and physical resemblance to the erect phallus, which so definitively distinguish him from his effeminate, mother-dominated rival Vladimir, who is merely a figurehead for Ivan's Boyar enemies. Ivan's strategy is immediately recognized by the Livonian Ambassador, who says,

“If he’s strong—they’ll recognize him.”<sup>22</sup> Ivan’s semiotic project is to make the phallic icon replace traditional symbols and assume the power of the index.

The opening shot is a close-up of the crown, a classical example of metonymy. Though Thompson claims that this shot introduces a “spatial lack” that is soon filled by the entrance of Ivan (p. 117), one could more readily argue that this opening close-up privileges the importance of the symbol over the man. When Ivan finally appears, he emerges out of the foreground with his back to the camera and is brought forward passively to receive the crown, which is kissed and blessed by Pimen, the Metropolitan of Moscow, who officiates at the ceremony. Then Ivan intervenes; his hands reach up and place the crown on his own head, which (as Thompson also observes) is perfectly shaped to receive it—the first sign of the iconic resemblance between person and paraphernalia in this chain of expressionistic doubling. After receiving the scepter and orb



and nodding his crown to Pimen, Ivan suddenly spins around and reveals his face for the first time in a quick medium shot. The resemblance between signifiers is strengthened when Ivan is showered with gold coins while he himself, as the screenplay describes, “like an icon in its frame . . . is encased in golden garments.” He breaks free of these “golden chains” when he moves forward to speak his first words as Tsar: “Now for the first time a Prince of Muscovy takes the crown of Tsar of all Russia upon himself.” In beginning to define himself metonymically as the embodiment of Russia, he uses body metaphors. “To hold the Russian land in a single hand strength is needed . . . And what does our fatherland

now resemble but a trunk, severed at knee and elbow?” (p. 50, 55) In Part II these images will become more significant, for Ivan will use other “hands” (both literally and through synecdoche), those of his Oprichnik guards, to perform his tyrannical deeds, including the beheadings of some of the Boyars. But here in Part I the issue is the acquisition of power, not its corrupting influence. As Ivan vigilantly listens to the Livonian Ambassador’s reaction to his speech (“He must not become strong”), the shadow of the eagle from the Tsar’s phallic scepter is projected onto his upturned face, revealing his capacity to absorb and embody the icon (the eagle), the symbol (the scepter) and the index (the shadow).



### The Wedding Banquet: The Head of State Stands up to the Challenge

Strengthened by his marriage to Anastasia, the new Tsar demonstrates his ability to stand up to three challenges offered by the people, the Boyars, and foreign enemies, who will repeatedly test his strength through Parts I and II. Combining the symmetry of the doublet and triplet, the opening image presents the bridal couple seated on linked thrones with triangular shaped backs. While the heads of other characters in the scene also evoke the triangle by means of the head-gear they wear, only the bare head of the iconic hero—with its broad forehead accented by a widow’s peak and its narrow chin emphasized by a pointed beard—is triangular in itself. Already having proved itself well fitted to receive the crown in the opening coronation, here the Head of State replaces the crown entirely.

When Ivan confronts the angry mob that breaks into the hall, he strengthens his posi-

tion as Head of State by using his wit to turn these iconic connections to his advantage, playing with the visual similarity between bells and heads, two of the film's important motifs on the audio and visual tracks. When Gregory, a giant-sized member of the mob, mentions a falling bell as a "dread omen," Ivan whose own head is seen in close-up, responds: "Any head that believes in magic is like a bell." He taps his finger on the forehead of Gregory . . . "Empty." After the crowd's passion is dissipated by Ivan's joke, he releases his own castrating fury, threatening: "Whosoever without the Tsar's permission has cut down a bell shall speedily, by the Tsar's decree, have his head cut also." When he totally masters the crowd and the treacherous Boyars who have aroused the people's rebellion, we see Ivan's full figure again (as he is described earlier in the screenplay) "towering like an angry giant."

Ivan's cunning tactics of moving between humor and threats are reminiscent of the "castrating" Lincoln in the lynch mob sequence. In both crises the lone phallic hero "stands up" to an angry mob and in every one-to-one confrontation proves to be "the bigger of the two," even when the other is physically as large. We first see this pattern when Ivan's friend Kolychev asks permission to retire to a monastery. Hurt by this request, Ivan responds "betwixt thee and the Tsar of Heaven I shall not stand," then suddenly stands up and embraces his bulky friend (who had looked very large), becoming the bigger of the two both physically and morally. This pattern is used again in the context of foreign affairs when the envoy from Kazan taunts Ivan with, "Kazan—big. Moscow—small," and gives him a knife to take his own life, presenting the comparison of phallic power in both verbal and visual terms. Just as Ivan had received and transformed the sign of the crown in the opening coronation, here he grabs the fetishized knife and uses it to rally the support of the Russian people to "finish with Kazan forever," inspiring one of his new followers to reverse the taunt—"Kazan is little, Moscow is big."

### **The Battle of Kazan: Ivan at the Apex**

At Kazan, Ivan's newly acquired power is tested in battle and reinforced by the posi-

tioning of his figure within the frame. The sequence opens with a montage of cannons being pushed up a steep incline. The serpentine line of soldiers zigzagging their way up a hill, from the summit of which Ivan oversees their movements, prefigures the final coronation. When these soldiers deposit their coins for the cannon fire, the image evokes the shower of gold coins from the opening coronation. Here the delay in Ivan's entrance into the scene no longer signals a lack of power, but the superiority of his position at the top of the hill and at the head of the army that conquers the Tower of Kazan. The visual punning on head and bell introduced in the wedding banquet is here elaborated into a multi-tiered structure of matching icons—the cupola-shaped helmets that identify Ivan's soldiers in battle, the hill, the conical tent with its triangular opening, through which Ivan makes his grand entrance, and the Tsar himself.

Within this sequence that marks a new high-point for Ivan, his ascension as Tsar is doubly proclaimed—making this episode a microcosm of the entire film's structure. It is first announced by common soldiers, who will later become his Oprichnik guards. As Ivan stands "high up, in front of the tents, above Kazan, . . . silhouetted against the morning sky," Basmanov tells young Fyodor, "See, son—the Tsar of all Russia" (pp. 84–85). At the end of the sequence, the second proclamation is made by Ivan himself. As his lone figure "towers above the cannon," surveying his victory amidst swirls of smoke, Ivan proclaims: "Now indeed I'll be Tsar; the Tsar of Moscow shall be recognized everywhere!" (p. 91).

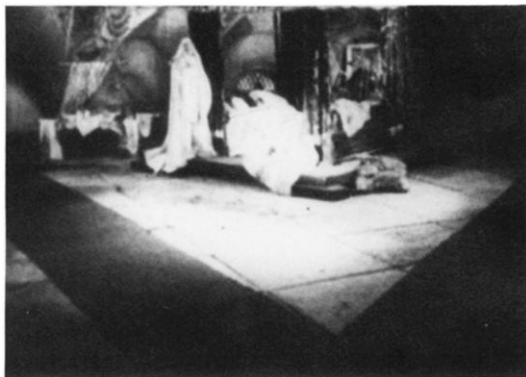
### **Ivan's Illness: The Rise and Fall of the Good Father**

From the pinnacle of victory at Kazan, Ivan plunges to the nadir when he is overcome by a deathly illness that dramatizes one of the dangers of investing all power in a mortal body. The sudden decline in Ivan's fortune reveals the alternating design of the narrative—a pattern that had earlier been figured visually in the zigzagging movements of the soldiers at Kazan, but that here is made manifest in the rising and falling movement of the Tsar. The alternating movement is also present in



the way we read the delayed appearance of Ivan. No longer signalling a lack of importance as in the coronation or a position of power as in Kazan, this time the delay intensifies our suspense concerning his proximity to death.

When we finally do see Ivan, he lies on his deathbed receiving extreme unction, surrounded by priests. The visual details recall the ritual of the opening coronation, suggesting these last rites will bring closure to his reign as Tsar. The first move he makes is his hand receiving the candle from Pimen, the officiating priest, in the same way it had earlier grasped the royal scepter. This ceremony shifts the emphasis from Ivan's body back to the ritual paraphernalia, where it resided at the opening of the film before Ivan's first entrance. The triangular motif, previously centered on Ivan's head, here is displaced to compositions around his bed, including a white triangular wedge that juts into the foreground like an arrow pointing away from the weakened Tsar. An



open Gospel is placed over his face, creating a low tent from which he can barely peer out and mocking the lofty hilltop tent from which he had made his grand entrance at Kazan. The tent is also miniaturized in the curtained crib of Ivan's son Dmitry. Dark spectators (his Boyar enemies) emerge out of the foreground, reminding us of Ivan's first appearance at the coronation, suggesting that one of them may now emerge as the new Tsar. As the Boyars pass in front of and surround him, they temporarily block him from the camera and make him disappear, as if to hasten his death.

In confronting the Boyars and their refusal to pledge their support to Ivan's son Dmitry, the Tsar repeatedly rises and falls. After

Kurbsky pledges his loyalty to Dmitry, Ivan promises to *raise* him to his former position as he pushed him *down* to a kneeling posture. Even when Ivan himself assumes the most groveling horizontal postures, he possesses an air of dignity, particularly when he lifts his chin with its pointed beard. This close-up of his thrusting chin, which is repeated later in the scene, makes Ivan look like a fallen Pharaoh and enables him to maintain his image as a powerful icon even in decline.

Although he is nursed by Anastasia, Ivan is not infantilized by his illness. In Part I of the film he is never inscribed as the son, but always remains the good father, a role reinforced in this sequence by the presence of his infant son Dmitry (who never appears again). Ivan is presented as an orphaned, self-made man who is contrasted to the two pairs of mother-and-son figures (Anastasia and Dmitry vs. Eurphrosyne and Vladimir). The deathly illness of the patriarch opens a space in the foreground for a struggle between these emerging matriarchs: "Mother against mother, to defend her offspring she has risen" (p. 103).<sup>23</sup> Yet this sequence is designed to convince us that neither an infant nor an idiot (let alone a woman) can rival the physical and mental powers of the manly Ivan, who remains formidable even at the threshold of death.

This exclusive adherence to the role of father was not part of Eisenstein's original conception. In the screenplay Part I opens with a prologue (now a flashback in Part II of the film) in which the eight-year-old Ivan witnesses the poisoning of his mother by their Boyar relatives, prefiguring the death of Anastasia. The recent death of his father had opened a space for this treachery. The orphaned boy cowers in fear before the Boyars, who also murder his mother's lover. The young prince is forced to crawl on his hands and knees as the adult Ivan would later do in his grave illness. When Ivan first tries to assert his force, he arouses the derisive laughter of the Boyar patriarchs who surround him. When Suisky, "a Boyar of gigantic stature" (p. 27), tramples on the bed of Ivan's dead mother and insults her memory by suggesting that Ivan may be a bastard, the boy orders his arrest and makes his first decisive move toward becoming a real Tsar. This prologue evokes the oedipal configuration in identify-

ing Ivan as a son who has an intense love for his mother (which is later displaced onto his wife Anastasia) and (as in *Hamlet*) a murderous rivalry with the treacherous patriarchs who have replaced his royal father.

In Part I, Ivan is the young man establishing his patriarchal power; the adulterous desires of the young challenger are displaced onto Kurbsky. This is the Ivan with whom Eisenstein personally identified, particularly in those moments when the Tsar was forced to grovel before other patriarchs.

In my own personal, too-personal, history I myself too often perpetrated this heroic deed of self-abasement. And in my personal, too-personal, innermost life, perhaps somewhat too often, too hurriedly, even almost too willingly and also . . . as unsuccessfully. However, I have also, like Ivan, managed to cut off heads sticking out of fur coats; the Terrible Tsar and I have pressed the proud gold hems together, accepting humiliation in the name of our most passionate aspirations.

And often, after lifting up the sword over another's head, I have brought it down not so much on his as on my own.<sup>24</sup>

Ironically, Eisenstein identifies Stalin with the treacherous patriarch against whom Ivan rebels, knowing that Stalin would still cast himself as the Tsar. Perhaps this private irony helped to sustain Eisenstein through his period of compromise. In Part II Ivan becomes the tyrannical patriarch with unrestricted power. The insertion of the original prologue as a flashback not only helps to motivate his purges against the Boyars as revenge and to retain spectator sympathy with Ivan's cause, but it also carries the Oedipal struggle into both parts of the film and thereby creates a stronger base for his fetishization as Tsar.

The different Ivans of Part I and II are presented as the good and bad father respectively—images that were identified in Eisenstein's own personal history with his inspiring teacher Meyerhold and the Saturnian Stalin. Eisenstein conceptualized both patterns as falling within the Oedipal configuration, of which he was skeptical because of what he considered Freud's overemphasis on sexuality, yet which he nevertheless applied (in a politicized version) to his own personal history.

The Oedipus complex, standing out from Freud's teaching so disproportionately and exaggeratedly—in the play of passions within the school

itself: the sons encroaching on the father. In reaction to the father's tyrannical regime, a father more like Saturn devouring his children than like Oedipus' father, the unoffending spouse of Jocasta . . . Why am I so heated, touching on the inner atmosphere of a group of scientists long dispersed? . . . Of course, I long ago stopped describing Freud's court and am now writing about the atmosphere in the school and theater of the idol of my youth, my theatrical mentor my teacher. Meyerhold!<sup>25</sup>

His emotional construction of Meyerhold and Stalin as the good and bad father was highly intensified for Eisenstein, for the former was imprisoned, tortured and murdered by the latter. As a loyal, loving son to the good father, Eisenstein hid and preserved Meyerhold's outlawed archives—a move that was almost as rebellious a deed against the bad father Stalin as was his portrayal of Ivan in Part II.

### Counter Moves: The Shadow of Death and Power

This structural unit of the narrative (covering what Thompson identifies as sections 5 and 6) alternates between the Boyars' plot to weaken Ivan abroad and isolate him at home and the countermoves of the Tsar. Though we have no way of knowing how much time has elapsed since Ivan's recovery from his deathly illness, the position of this sequence suggests that he is still on the defensive. His power is made manifest here not primarily through his person, but, as in the opening coronation, through his manipulation of symbolic paraphernalia—the globe and chessboard so prominently featured in the mise-en-scène in which he designs his moves—and through the projection of his shadow.



The chessboard leads us to read the main characters of the film as iconic figures making strategic counter-moves on a black and white grid of manichean morality. After having successfully escaped from check mate, the White King takes the Black Bishop (sending Pimen away); the evil Black side responds by sending their Queen after his. This kind of reading extends to Part II, where the chessboard becomes the setting for the livonian court which rewards the Russian Knight Kurbsky for betraying his King. In Livonia the chessboard court is feminized, as a sign of its weakness and decadence, particularly when contrasted with Ivan's patriarchal manipulation of the board in Part I, where he sends it as a gift to Queen Elizabeth to show her how to circumvent the Livonian blockade. In this chessgame structure, though the king is repeatedly threatened with check mate, Ivan ultimately proves to be the cunning victor.

In the scenes where we see Ivan plotting against the Boyars, his head and body cast looming shadows on the wall—an indexical sign of his growing power. When he is seated before the globe, both his body and shadow dominate the composition. In one shot the shadows of Ivan's head and of the globe are equal in size. Throughout these scenes, the interplay between the two shadows projects Ivan's desire for world domination.

The shadow motif also figures significantly in Euphrosyne's poisoning of Anastasia. Immediately after appointing herself as assassin, she turns away from the camera and her face moves into shadow. Later, when a two-shot of Ivan and the shadow of the globe is intercut into the scene where Euphrosyne (garbed in black) is seated on Anastasia's bed (which is predominantly white), the juxtaposition makes us see the murderess as the evil shadow of the Queen. When Ivan enters Anastasia's chamber, he casts a shadow on the wall. His decline begins when he lowers himself to Anastasia, lying on her breast for consolation. In this feminine context and weakened posture, his shadow of power is subdued by the Boyar's betrayal, Kurbsky's defeat, and Anastasia's death. As the murderous Black Queen lurks below in the darkness, the White Queen lifts the cup and drinks the poison; the dark vessel blocks out her face and, through a fade, instantly transports her to the world of shadows.

## The Funeral: Ivan's Second Resurrection

Ivan again descends to the nadir at Anastasia's funeral, where he returns to the humiliating postures he had assumed in the illness sequence. He is revived by two new strategies: his move to regain his Bishop (recalling his friend Kolychev from the monastery) and Basanov's idea of making a new use of his pawns (creating the Oprichniki, a personal guard of commoners who will owe their loyalty only to him). Though both moves will cause him grief in Part II, here they revive his spirit, making him rise and shout: "The Moscow Tsar is not broken yet" (p. 125). Most important, both moves inspire him to design the strategy that sets up the final coronation—his own deliberate retreat to win the loyalty, not only of a personal guard, but of the masses: "We shall come back summoned by the people . . . in that summons—I shall find power unlimited. A new anointing, that I shall use for the great cause" (pp. 128–9). Although the killing of Anastasia was designed to weaken Ivan, his isolation actually makes him stronger for it leads him to break all ties with his family and class and to create new bonds with the people. It ultimately results in an eroticizing of the final ceremony, in which he marries the masses who replace his dead bride.

## The Final Coronation: Fetishization Achieved

In this final historic ascension, Ivan awaits news from Moscow. His hands are bejewelled as in the opening coronation. But instead of the traditional paraphernalia of the royal scepter and golden robes, his attendants hand him a long staff and garb him in a full-length fur coat which perhaps prepares him for the beastly acts to follow in Part II. When the serpentine line of pilgrims finally appears on the snowy plain (evoking the zigzagging line of soldiers under his command at Kazan), Ivan rises to his full height, towering "like a black shadow" (p. 134). Propped on his staff, his lone phallic figure looms in the foreground, arching around the vaginal aperture through which we see the coiled populace waiting to be dominated and ruled.

In another shot his huge bare head in profile, its triangular shape accentuated by his Roman nose and pointed beard, dominates



the foreground and the right half of the frame, while the faint line of his followers swirls deep into the left background. As in his earlier scenes of scheming, Ivan's singular mind and body rule the world, but his domination has fully materialized and is no longer cast in shadows. His conscious strategy of withholding himself from the masses in order to intensify their desire has succeeded in completing the total fetishization of both his head and body. Unlike Lincoln, the Tsar in his final appearance is not seated and restrained, but fully erect and empowered, ready to unleash his full force in Part II. As in *Young Mr. Lincoln*, we see the denial of sexuality in the

service of a moralized discourse of political power, but here more directly rooted in the dynamics of desire.

In contrast to Part I in which all of the ritualized sequences echo and reinforce the framing coronations, Part II is structured around a series of mock coronations: the opening satiric sequence in the chessboard Livonian court where Kurbsky is falsely empowered for his treachery against Ivan; the disrobing of the boy Tsar in the flashback to his childhood when Ivan was still only a figurehead; the Tsar's appearance in monk's robes at the Fiery Furnace play where he vows henceforth to live up to his name, Ivan the

Terrible; and the mock robing and anointment of Vladimir that cast him as a clownish stand-in for the victim in the assassination of the Tsar. At the height of his tyranny, Ivan is confronted by Philip (his old friend Kolychev from Part I, who now, as Metropolitan of Moscow, becomes one of Ivan's most potent enemies). Philip reproaches him by saying: "I cannot recognize the Tsar, neither by his clothes nor by his heathen deeds." Once the power of office has been fully transferred to Ivan's person, it no longer resides in tradition and no longer holds moral boundaries inviolate. That is why it is so easy for coronations to be mocked, robes discarded, and laws broken. The fetishization of the phallic hero is constructed as a perversion that inevitably spawns tyranny.

Although Ford and Eisenstein both use the visual icon of the phallic hero to direct the spectator's reading of the narrative, their readings of patriarchal power are quite different. While Ford asserts a symbolic phallic power for Lincoln, he minimizes or displaces both its sexual and violent components—by desexualizing the Oedipal configuration in the melodrama, by virtually omitting the Civil War from the historic context, and by stressing the seated figure of Lincoln in the visuals. *Young Mr. Lincoln* implies that these more threatening components of patriarchal power can be held in check. In contrast, Eisenstein presents brutal violence as an inevitable consequence of patriarchal power and uses sexuality as a temporary displacement for aggression—the fetishization of the phallic hero in Part I is only the prelude to Ivan's rampant display of totalitarian excesses in Part II. Made under the shadow of World War II, Eisenstein's *Ivan* may lead one to conclude that this potential danger is inherent in the "cult of personality" created around any national leader—be it an Ivan or Stalin, a Mussolini or Hitler, or even a Roosevelt or Lincoln.

#### NOTES

1. Sergei Eisenstein, *Film Essays and a Lecture*, ed. by Jay Leyda. New York: Praeger, 1970, pp. 140 & 149. According to Leyda, Eisenstein's essay was written in 1945 for a volume on Ford in the World Film Art series. The volume was never published because a change in policy discontinued the series. Eisenstein's essay was published posthumously.

2. Editors of *Cahiers du Cinéma*, "John Ford's *Young Mr. Lincoln*," originally published in 1970 in *Cahiers du Cinéma*, reprinted in *Movies and Methods*, ed. Bill Nichols. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976, pp. 493–529.

3. Following the success of *Alexander Nevsky*, Eisenstein contemplated shooting various subjects. Some were just talked about; others had treatments or even scripts, which he prepared. But in the end, none was produced. However varied they were, not one was acceptable to Stalin. Then came the dictator's decision—that Eisenstein should make *Ivan the Terrible*, but as the story of a positive historical character, despite the fact that up to the Stalin era, Ivan had been portrayed by all Marxist historians—let alone others—as a cruel tyrant, a fratricidal murderer, a ruler *not* to be emulated. Eisenstein now had to portray the opposite, which he proceeded to do in Part I.

"Having faithfully followed the Party line, he continued and completed Part II of *Ivan*. When he submitted it to the Ministry of Cinematography, there was consternation and fear. It was clear that Eisenstein had shown Ivan as a paranoic murderer and drawn the parallel with Stalin." "Preface" to *Immortal Memories: An Autobiography by Eisenstein*, trans. by Herbert Marshall. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1983, pp. xiv–xv.

4. Although Eisenstein noted that "the events of the film do not go as far as Lincoln's nationwide struggle for the unity of the country" (p. 142), he was even more concerned with the issue of the Great Emancipator's actual historical record.

We attach to his name the emancipation of the Negro slaves, and the fortunate conclusion of the fratricidal war between the North and South. Reading history in closer detail, we learn that in these matters Lincoln conducted himself somewhat less decisively and courageously than we might have wished, and considerably more slowly and cautiously than now—looking back—would seem necessary. And we learn that the leadership of the Northern cause was not ultimately disinterested. We also know that after the war many of these liberators took their revenge by enslaving and exploiting not only Negroes but white slaves as well. ("Mr. Lincoln by Mr. Ford," pp. 143–4)

5. "Mr. Lincoln by Mr. Ford," p. 145.

6. Eisenstein's *IVAN THE TERRIBLE: A Neoformalist Analysis* (Princeton: University Press, 1981), pages 53–64. I am unaware of any previous comparisons between *Young Mr. Lincoln* and *Ivan the Terrible*. Though Thompson makes extensive use of *Mary of Scotland*, she never mentions *Young Mr. Lincoln*. Though the *Cahiers* analysis of *Young Mr. Lincoln* mentions Eisenstein twice—once to cite an anecdote he told about Lincoln moving to Washington (which is quoted from "Mr. Lincoln by Mr. Ford" though the essay is not specifically named, p. 516) and again for a comparison with *The General Line* (p. 528), there is no reference to *Ivan the Terrible*.

7. Ron Abramson and Rick Thompson have also criticized the *Cahiers* analysis for its omission of visual codes and have provided an alternative reading that includes such visual components as Lincoln's iconic costume, eyes, and triangular compositions. Although their findings in no way anticipate my own, they also see Lincoln's character in a process of change and development, as opposed to the *Cahiers* model which presents Lincoln's character as static. See "Young Mr. Lincoln Reconsidered: An Essay on the Theory and Practice of Film Criticism," *Cine-Tracts*, II, 1 (Fall 1978), 42–62.

8. This question was already central in the Estabrook story outline.

He went *from the bottom to the top*. How did he do it? The answer is a timely parallel of a modern question more vital than ever now; how can the common man get ahead? . . . We should maintain the underlying thread that carries the *greatness* of our theme, never losing the magic of the humble man who *rises above the herd* and then *reaches down to help others*. This is the *punch* that gives the picture "*size*," and conveys the feeling that we are in the presence of one of the *great* men of the world. (p. 1).

The language in this passage (particularly the phrases I have underlined) clearly shows the valorizing of physical codes as a source of pleasure and success in the Hollywood industry's thinking.

9. *Cahiers* analysis, p. 515.

10. "The scandal of Lincoln's difference is even more noticeable to the spectators than to the characters of the scene. First it is apparent at the *physical* level, his shape, size, gait, rigidity, his undertaker look (Lincoln's mythical costume), then, while he is dancing, in the lack of co-ordination and rhythm in his movements." (*Cahiers* analysis, p. 516)

11. In both the "Temporary Script" (dated January 13, 1939) and the "Final Script" the rivalry in this scene between Lincoln and Douglas, both romantically and politically, is much stronger than in the film. Mary explicitly assesses their relative strength as aspiring politicians and as opponents in the coming trial. To Lincoln, she says of Douglas (who has been identified as "a life-long Democrat"): "Perhaps *he* will be the stronger" (p. 85). And in relation to the Clay trial, she says, "With Mr. Douglas advising the prosecution it will be—well, almost a test of strength between you, won't it?" (p. 87). This remark is bound to evoke the earlier weight-lifting contest in which Lincoln had successfully challenged the strongman Hercules (a scene that is replaced in the film by the rail-splitting and tug-of-war contests), particularly if one recalls the sarcastic remark Lincoln had made at Douglas' first appearance: "Here comes Mr. Stephen A. Douglas, the little Giant himself" (p. 31).

12. Eisenstein also noted the connection between Lincoln and Don Quixote.

You are surprised to observe what accurate intuition and skill were shown by the pleasant-looking young Henry Fonda in transforming himself into this Don Quixote, whose armour was the U.S. Constitution, whose helmet was the traditional top-hat of a small-town lawyer, and whose Rosinante was a placid little mule that he straddles, his long legs almost touching the ground. ("Mr. Lincoln by Mr. Ford," pp. 145–6)

The *Cahiers* critics describe Lincoln's friend Efe as "a sort of Sancho Panza, who is at his side in a number of scenes in the film" (p. 521).

13. The "Temporary Script" has several other allusions to the slavery issue that don't appear in the film:

(1) At the circus sequence, Mary reveals her tacit support of Slavery: "Sister says I'll never really be happy until I marry a man who'll be President. But I tell her I'd rather marry a *good* man with a *good* mind who has a chance to be *famous*, than to marry any *other* man, even though he had all the *negroes* and *gold* in the world" (p. 32). This compromising remark is still present in the "Final Script."

(2) The attractions in the circus sequence (later changed to the Fair) include "THREE PRIZE DARKIES, banjo players and singers, guaranteed to 'move every ear with delight and every soul with ecstasy.'" (p. 36). These "darkies" remain in the "Final Script."

(3) In a final "mystical" scene in which Lincoln talks to a mysterious "voice" that may be God or himself, Lincoln refers to his Gettysburg speech and to the "nearly fifty thousand men (who) fell there, . . . both sides," and the voice replies: "But it's a free country—and I don't just mean slavery. The finest democracy on earth!" (pp. 155–56). The mystical voice and its

allusions to the Civil War are gone from the "Final Script."

14. This final accusation was suggested by Zanuck at the January 23rd story conference.

Mr. Zanuck feels that we have missed completely on the windup of the trial. It is sloughed off too quickly and leaves a lot of questions unanswered. Mr. Zanuck outlined the kind of scene we should have here, but pointed out that his dialogue was crudely suggested. (p. 5)

What follows in the notes is almost precisely what exists in the film version—with minor adjustments in the dialogue. However, the key line that refers to the visual code of the body, "Your body hid what you were doing," is *not* included in Zanuck's suggestions.

15. The ending agreed upon in the January 23rd story conference (and executed in the "Final Script") was even smoother than the film version in moving between the two iconic images of Lincoln.

The scene of the young Lincoln riding along becomes less distinct—while the Memorial becomes clearer and clearer, finally completely obliterating the other. (p. 6)

In the film the historic image from the Memorial quite literally fills the gap left by the young Lincoln when he abandons the frame.

16. Thompson, p. 173.

17. "A Dialectic Approach to Film," in *Film Form* (Cleveland and New York: Meridian Books, 1957), p. 61.

18. "Mr. Lincoln by Mr. Ford," p. 143.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 140.

20. I have never been convinced by Brian Henderson's argument in "Two Types of Film Theory" (in *A Critique of Film Theory*, New York: Dutton, 1980) that Eisenstein had no cinematic theory of the whole that was not dependent on literary models. I would argue that his theory of the dominant would certainly qualify as a non-literary theory of the whole. Eisenstein's appreciation of the "astonishing harmony" of *Young Mr. Lincoln* as well as his own design of *Ivan* show such a theory in practice.

21. In Eisenstein's original conception (preserved in the published screenplay), Part I opens with a prologue which, like Ford's opening poem, presents an image of the young hero that lies outside the events depicted in the diegesis and raises hermeneutic questions concerning the youth's future political empowerment in the context of his emotional ties to his dead mother. Both the screenplay and the film end with Ivan's final ascension, which, like the closing image of Lincoln, is situated in a national monument (the Alexandrov Liberty).

22. All quoted dialogue will be taken from the screenplay rather than the subtitles. Sergei M. Eisenstein, *Ivan the Terrible*, trans. by Ivor Montagu and Herbert Marshall. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1962.

23. Ivan's decline also opens a space in the foreground for the adulterous desires and political ambitions of his friendly rival Kurbsky, who plays a role that is somewhat analogous to that of Stephen Douglas in *Young Mr. Lincoln*.

24. *Immoral Memories*, p. 226.

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 159–60.

## Reviews

### EUREKA

Director: Nicolas Roeg. Script by Roeg and Paul Mayersberg, from Marshall Houts's novel "Murder in the Caribbean." Photography: Alex Thomson. Producer: Jeremy Thomas. MGM/UA Classics.

### INSIGNIFICANCE

Director: Nicolas Roeg. Script: Terry Johnson, from his own play. Producer: Jeremy Thomas. Photography: Jeremy Thomas. Island Alive.

Eighteen years after the release of *Performance*, Nicolas Roeg's films continue to baffle many audiences with their splintered editing patterns, their relentless inserting of fragments from their characters' pasts, their constant folding and twisting of linear continuity into Moebius strips. Yet he has stated his objective plainly (to Harlan Kennedy in